

**Statement by H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia
In a High-Level Meeting of 67th Session of the General Assembly on the
Rule of Law at the National and International Levels
United Nations Headquarters
Monday, September 24, 2012**

Mr. President;

Mr. Secretary-General;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The decision to convene this debate on the rule of law is commendable. It is timely and opportune because transformational changes, which are occurring in the international arena, dictate that we reaffirm our shared values. We believe fundamentally that national and international peace and security must rest upon our acceptance of the supremacy of law in the conduct of affairs; and, indeed, this law must be founded on principles of fairness and justice.

The Government and people of Liberia, working closely with the United Nations and the international community, have made significant progress in re-establishing the rule of law, after 14 years of a ravaging conflict that crippled the entire rule of law system. They have further resolved to bid farewell to an era of lawlessness and impunity and, instead, to embrace the wind of “rule of law” currently blowing across the country.

In the consolidation of peace, we have focused particular attention on the re-establishment of the rule of law. It was an important pillar of our Poverty Reduction Strategy, and today it is an integral part of our Agenda for Transformation. It occupies a central place in our engagement with the Peace Building Commission, and is a strong link binding the countries of the g7+.

We are proud of the progress we have made in rebuilding the justice and security institutions in terms of structure and capacity, especially the Liberia

National Police and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization – the foremost institutions charged with ensuring internal security.

We have, among other things, set up the following institutions:

- i. A Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit and a Specialized Court, which are investigating and prosecuting cases of sexual and gender-based violence;
- ii. Enactment of a Freedom of Information Act and signing of the Table Mountain Declaration
- iii. A Law Reform Commission, which is modernizing our national laws, bringing them into conformity with international standards;
- iv. An Independent National Commission on Human Rights, which has been challenged to promote a human rights culture and help foster reconciliation amongst our people;
- v. A Land Commission, which is reforming the land tenure system to minimize conflicts around land ownership in the country;
- vi. A Judicial Institute, which is engaged in ongoing training of judges and other justice actors to enhance the capacity of the judiciary; and
- vii. A new Commercial Court, which is enabling the Government to speedily resolve matters relating to commercial transactions, thus improving the investment climate.

Efforts are under way to improve other components of the criminal justice system. These include construction and rehabilitation of corrections facilities across the country; the introduction of probation service, which involves the participation of civil society; the Magistrate Sitting Program, which involves Magistrates holding court in the prison; the establishment of a Pre-trial Detention Task Force passage of a new Jury Law, which not only improves the qualifications for jurors, but also expands the jurisdiction of the magisterial courts so that minor cases will be disposed of more expeditiously. These activities represent the collaborative commitment of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice to firmly re-establish the rule of law in Liberia. This has contributed to Liberia's peace and security, and has set the country firmly on the path of democratic consolidation and economic progress.

Mr. President;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the past week, the Security Council has formally endorsed, in a resolution, a phased reconfiguration of the presence of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) over a three-year period.

As we move forward ~~jointly~~ toward implementing this transition, we are even more challenged to maintain the ~~is~~ momentum for change and reform. An important objective is to decentralize the operations of justice and security institutions. The establishment of five regional justice and security hubs, in strategic locations across the country, will enhance the decentralization process and make justice more accessible to remote parts of the country. The first of these hubs is more than 50 percent operational. The Government is committed to increasing its budgetary allocations to ensure that the objectives are achieved and our investments are sustained. ~~The Government is committed to increasing its budgetary allocations to ensure that the objectives are achieved and our investments are sustained.~~

~~We also face~~ Most of these challenges ~~which~~ are daunting but not insurmountable. They include:

- i. Mobilizing resources to construct the four remaining hubs and make them operational ~~and make them operational~~;
- ii. Implementing constitutional reform and the repeal of obsolete laws, especially those that stifle development, ~~especially those that stifle development~~;
- iii. Accelerating development of the human resource capacity, quantitatively and qualitatively, especially the Liberia National Police; ~~quantitatively and qualitatively, especially the Liberia National Police~~;
- ~~iv.~~ Extending sexual and gender-based violence services in all fifteen counties of the country riesry;
- iv.
- v. Expanding community corrections and rehabilitation programs for criminal offenders; and

vi. Harmonizing the formal and informal justice systems, so as to provide greater access to justice.

~~As part of our reform agenda, structures and systems are being established to ensure oversight and accountability in all public institutions, particularly those responsible for promoting the rule of law. Notwithstanding the challenges we have encountered in our crusade against corruption, never in our country's history has there been a stronger stance than under our administration to tackle corruption in all its manifestations. We are strengthening investigative and prosecutorial capacity to respond to and act on reports of the General Auditing Commission and other investigative bodies.~~

Mr. President:

We are not deterred by these challenges; rather, we are encouraged by the positive outcomes which we have witnessed in our reform efforts. In this spirit, we make these voluntary pledges:

1. To develop and publicize an integrated national strategy for the justice and security sectors by the end of [the year](#) 2013;
2. To develop a multi-year strategy and establish Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Units in all fifteen counties of Liberia by 2015;
3. Establish a Civilian Oversight Board for the Liberia National Police, by 2013, to accept complaints from the public on acts of [police](#) misconduct;
4. Ratify Optional Protocol No. 3, specifically dealing with the sexual exploitation and sale of children.
5. Introduce [new](#) legislation and training programs to tackle transnational crimes by mid-2013.

In making these pledges, we reaffirm that the rule of law is a fundamental tenet of good governance in all of its dimensions. We undertake to continue to put in place those institutions which will consolidate peace and reconciliation through greater access to justice. In this effort, we will work in concert with our partners whose support is invaluable and highly appreciated.

I thank you.